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**2013**

As you turn to 2013 business planning, how will your firm drive profitable business from existing clients, and attract new ones? Consider a few resolutions that might lead your firm to an even better year in 2013.

**Drew West** • Jan. 28, 2013

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**From the Feb. 2013 issue.**

As you turn to 2013 business planning, how will your firm drive profitable business from existing clients, and attract new ones? Consider a few resolutions that might lead your firm to an even better year in 2013.

**Get More From Your People.** Why not resolve to get more out of your people? But instead of focusing on simply asking everyone to “do more,” why not find ways to help the entire firm be more effective?

Focus on improving resource capacity management. Having the most appropriate people available means more billable capacity and higher margins. Ensure planners have easy visibility to the firm’s entire workload – actual and planned. Such visibility

usually comes by marrying the pipeline with actual work-in-process, so capacity is

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resource.

A sophisticated resource selection process is more likely to consistently place your people on rewarding client work, and expose the most effective combinations of partners, managers and staff. With the best people on the engagement, you're more likely to meet client expectations, and achieve the profit you expected – a win for everyone involved.

**Understand the Why Behind the What.** Few would disagree with a continuous-improvement resolution, yet many firms don't know with certainty what worked best – or why. Most firms accurately measure profits by client, location, service-line or industry. Yet many find it much more difficult to understand *why* an engagement was (or wasn't) profitable.

Why is the “why” so elusive? Oftentimes, the data necessary is siloed in different systems that not all staff can view. These “information islands” pose two challenges. First, data-gathering is complicated and time-consuming. Further, disconnected data doesn't establish cause-&-effect relationships, hiding the whole story beyond the results – just data, no insight.

Resolve to provide better information, so anyone can easily reveal which combinations of client-partner-staff-task led to expected results, and which ones didn't. Joining client, resource, engagement, and financial results maintains the context of the decisions that led to the results, offering insight into how to avoid past mistakes, leading to higher revenue, accelerated cash flow and improved margins.

**Place Information Where it's Needed.** Your people need information wherever they are – the office, a client site, or on the go. Resolve to make mobile devices an advantage for your firm.

First, study mobile activity to see how mobile workers already engage with the

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adoption with a “BYOD” approach that keeps everyone using their preferred device. Rich displays make remote engagement increasingly easy, as long as your software works appropriately across all devices. With well-proven reimbursement policies and security approaches, BYOD is becoming common across firms of all sizes.

**Publicize Expectations, Show Results.** Resolve to motivate staff with open communication about expectations. Go beyond sharing strategy and objectives at company-wide meetings and infuse a culture-of-accountability into the firm's daily operations. Imagine firm-wide clarity on individual, group and corporate expectations— with everyone making proactive adjustments if anticipated results slide off target.

Staff can be demoralized by hidden expectations or unclear status— a risk when those accountable see only after-the-fact results. Prevent this by making key performance indicators widely visible, and publish performance status as it happens. If staff is to make proactive adjustments, KPI status can't be outdated— so you need constant updates as WIP is completed. To do so, have all key information connected in a single environment.

What will your firm resolve to do better in 2013? Maximizing people, gaining insight, leveraging technology and clarifying expectations are four ideas to help your firm achieve the best results.

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*Drew West is the director of marketing for Deltek, a leading provider of enterprise software and information solutions for professional services firms and government contractors. With headquarters in Herndon, VA, the company has more than 1,600 employees worldwide.*

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